



La Pélite

The red gorge shows up in your mailbox when you least expect it.

Discovering...

Snails

154 species of snails live in Alpes-Maritimes, which makes up one quarter of all the known species in Mainland France. The department is therefore considered as a snail hotspot; many species are endemic to the Mercantour mountain range. We suspect that there are many more species yet to be discovered!

The Gorges de Daluis Regional Nature Reserve (RNR) is no exception with its two celebrities: *Macularia niciensis saintivesi* and *Solatopupa cianensis*. The small snails are the symbol of the territory as they can only be found on pelite in the Daluis and Cians canyons. Land snails are only active when air moisture is sufficiently high. Otherwise, they shrink back in their shells which they seal with a layer of mucus called epiphragm to avoid dehydration. Some snails live in deserts or on cliffs, under the sun, like our two canyon snails!

Symbols of slowness and fragility, they encourage the visitors of the Gorges de Daluis RNR to take their time to discover this magical land.

Meeting...

A malacologist

From the Greek word "malakos" meaning "bland", malacology is the study of molluscs. This science is used in biodiversity inventories, in snail breeding for human consumption, and also... in paleontology! Indeed, studying the matter fixed on the shells gives us information about the environment in which the snails lived. The oldest specimens are good material to recreate paleoenvironments!



Macularia niciensis © T. Corveler

In June 2016, the Gorges de Daluis RNR had the pleasure to welcome malacologist **Olivier Gargominy**, who works for the National Museum of Natural History in Paris. His passion allows him to travel to discover and identify snails in both Mainland and Overseas France.

To identify a snail, a malacologist must combine bibliographic research, anatomy and shell study, and sometimes, DNA sequencing!

Olivier has been working in the region for years, as he started working with Mercantour National Park in 2000 as part of the Generalised Biological Inventory. With the help of the very same volunteers he trained, he was able to discover a great number of new and forgotten species, among which some are very rare. For example: *Urticicola mounierensis*, endemic to the Mercantour mountain range, and that can only be found on some stable high-altitude calcareous scree.

Upcoming...

International Dark Sky Reserve

On **6th August**, in Valberg, official launch of a partnership between Mercantour National Park,

Préalpes d'Azur Park, and the Gorges de Daluis Reserve. On this occasion, you will discover how the territory aims to become a member of the International Dark Sky Reserve, as well as the new structure on Valberg's Planetary Trail: Planet Nine.

Talk: What is a nature reserve?

On **20th July**, at 6pm, a conference on the Gorges de Daluis Nature Reserve will be held in the community centre in Guillaumes.

Did you know...?

Solatopupa cianensis

This mollusc was discovered in 1910 by Caziot. It only lives in the Daluis and Cians gorges, where it is common and easy to spot. It is part of the Chondrinidae family. The French name "maillot des pérites" comes from its shape that makes it look like a swaddled new-born. It is a protected, pioneer and rupicolous (living on rocks) species, and an ancient witness of the life in the gorge.

Its red and black body is not even a centimetre long. Perfect for hiding on red pelite!

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